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THE RABBINATE OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE,
LONDON, FROM 1756-1842.

BY DR. C. DUSCHINSKY, London.

THE history of the various Jewish communities, the tales told about the numerous Kehillahs, forms as great and as important a part of Jewish history as do the tales of woe and persecution of the Jews as a people, and as the political history of the Jews, in their relation to other nations. Every community, be it large or small, has its own history with its personalities, scholars, benefactors, and—cranks. It might be difficult to write the history of a small non-Jewish community, but monographs on many a small Kehillah with no more than 50 to 100 families have often been written and form a valuable part of Jewish history.

The Ashkenazi community of London was at first a small hebrah only, but very soon increased in numbers. London, as the capital of the British Empire, as the centre of the world's commerce, soon after the readmission of the Jews in 1650, attracted many co-religionists from the Continent. Although the first settlers were Sephardim, we find a small Ashkenazi community as early as the year 1659. In 1675 the community had already developed so far as to be able to elect a Rabbi in the person of the learned R. Judah Loeb b. Ephraim Anschel, who in 1705 became Rabbi of Rotterdam. (See *J.H.S.E. Transact.*, vol. III, p. 105.)

Most of the Ashkenazi settlers of that time hailed from Germany, only very few from Poland. The first Parnas of the congregation, Abraham, or R. Aberle, came from Hamburg, and the first Rabbi of Duke's Place Synagogue, Uri Phoebush Hart, at first opponent of R. Judah Loeb's and afterwards his successor, was a native of Breslau and was known as R. Phybush Bressler. He was in office from 1692 until 1752. His successor was Rabbi Zevi Hirschel Lewin.

Through the kindness of Mr. E. N. Adler I have been enabled to obtain an insight into the spiritual life of the Ashkenazi community under the guidance of Rabbi Zevi Hirschel and his successor in office, David Tevele Schiff, who was Rabbi of Duke's Place Synagogue from 1765 until 1792. Mr. Adler allowed me the use of his manuscripts, Nos. 1160, 1248, and 2286 and others. MS. Adler 1248 contains, on 84 folio leaves, most of the discourses which Rabbi Zevi Hirschel Lewin, or as he was called in London Hart Lyon, delivered during his tenure of office in London in the years 1756-63. The first discourse is dated Sabbath Beha'alotka 5517 (June 1757) and the last the Sabbath preceding Passover (Sabbath Haggadol) 5523 (March 1763). MS. No. 1160 contains talmudic and other notes by David Tevele Schiff, some of them having been written in London. MS. 2286 is again the work of R. Zevi Hirsch.

I

RABBI HIRSCHEL LEWIN

as we shall call him for brevity's sake, and as he was generally called in later life, was born in 1721 at Reisha in Poland. He was the son of Rabbi Aryeh Loeb (Loewenstamm), then Rabbi of that town. Rabbi Aryeh Loeb was a descendant of great men. His father was Rabbi Saul of

Cracow, and his grandfather was the famous Rabbi Heschele Cracow, but the family traced their origin to Rabbi Jacob Weil of Regensburg (flourished about 1435) called Mahari Weil, to Rabbi Meir of Padua (Maharam Padua, died November 1583), Solomon Luria (Maharshal, died 1573), and even to the great Spanish statesman and Hebrew scholar Don Isaac Abrabanel (born 1437, died 1508). Rabbi Hirschel's father, R. Aryeh Loeb, was at first Rabbi in Reisha, where he still lived in the year 1728. Later he became Rabbi of Lemberg, then of Glogau and lastly of Amsterdam. In 1734 he signs in Glogau an approbation (הסכמה) dated 17th of Sivan, 5494, to the Talmud edition printed at Frankfort and Berlin. On the New Moon of the month of Tammuz, 5400 = July 1740, he received the call to Amsterdam.

Doubt has been expressed by various historians as to whether Rabbi Aryeh ever officiated in Lemberg. Landshut in his history of the Berlin Rabbis (p. 71) devotes a whole page to the task of solving this mystery. In the approbation to the Talmud edition just mentioned, he refers to himself as Rabbi elect of Lemberg. There being then no other proofs known of his ever having filled the office in Lemberg, Landshut, having no evidence, ventures the opinion that he was only *elected* to the office, but never actually officiated there (*op. cit.*, p. 72). Dembitzer, in his excellent work on the Rabbis of Lemberg, entitled *Kelilat Jofi* (Cracow, 1888), II, 83 a (without referring to Landshut's work), is of the opinion that R. Aryeh Loeb was at *one and the same time* Rabbi of Glogau *and* of Lemberg. According to Dembitzer he lived sometimes in the one town, sometimes in the other. We need only look at the map and measure the distance between these two places

to become at once convinced how improbable such a theory is. The journey by coach must have taken several weeks. We are now in a position to discard both these theories. MS. Adler 2286 is a scholar's note-book (a so-called 'Torah book') by Zevi Hirsch written in Glogau, and commenced in the year 1737. The title of this manuscript tells us that Rabbi Hirschel, who was then studying under his father, made these notes in order to keep a record of all the new points raised by his father in his talmudical lectures delivered at his Yeshibah (College). He styles his father (מ"ו ארי' ליב נ"ו אבד דק"ק גלוגא אשר הי' לפניו אב"ד דק"ק לבנו) 'R. Aryeh Loeb Rabbi of Glogau, who *was formerly* Rabbi of Lemberg' (see, however, *Megillat Sefer*, p. 67). This leaves no doubt that for some time he was actually Rabbi of the latter congregation.

Rabbi Aryeh Loeb is described as one of the most humble men that ever lived. Of a quiet disposition and saintly life, worldly goods had no value for him. He never said a word which he did not mean; strict as regards himself he was very lenient and most tolerant to others. Only on one point did he admit of no compromise, and that was in his unrelenting opposition to the adherents of the pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Zevi. He sided with Jacob Emden, who was his brother-in-law, in the latter's quarrel with R. Jonathan Eybeschütz. Many members of his family (his father R. Saul and his grandfather R. Heschel) had already before him actively combated the spreading of the sect of 'Shebsen' (as the adherents of Sabbatai Zevi were called). Many of the letters which he wrote against Eybeschütz are printed in Emden's works (*Hit'abkut*, *Sefat Emet*, &c.).

Rabbi Aryeh Loeb's wife was Miryam (died in

Amsterdam, 17th of Tammuz, 1753), daughter of the famous Ḥaham Zevi, Rabbi of the combined congregations, Hamburg, Altona, and Wandsbeck, later of Amsterdam and Lemberg (where he died on Monday, 1st of Iyyar, 1718), who likewise came from a family of great scholars. (See Appendix I.)

Born of such parents, it is no wonder that R. Hirschel Lewin was, from his earliest childhood, brought up in a religious atmosphere, taught to love his people and their tradition, and he soon became an eminent scholar. The education of Jewish children in those days consisted mainly of Hebrew. From the age of five the child was taught Hebrew, from morning to night, and Hebrew only. Not infrequently many boys of twelve or thirteen years of age had mastered a considerable part of the Talmud. Of a similar nature was Hirschel Lewin's early training, with the exception, that in addition to the Talmud, he was taught also Hebrew grammar, a very exceptional thing in those days. The MS. Adler No. 2286 was begun by him when he was only sixteen years old and gives proof that even then he was a master of Hebrew style, possessed of a clear head and had quite original ideas. We do not hear about him again until many years later. The first letter which we possess from him (Landshut, p. 72) is dated 1751, written when he was a private scholar in Glogau. This letter refers to the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy and is addressed to his brother Saul, then Rabbi of Dubno (later in Amsterdam). It appeared in the booklet, *Sefat Emet*, of his uncle Jacob Emden (p. 22 a). Having married Golde, daughter of David Tevele Cohen, Parnas in Glogau (died on the 9th of Tishri, 551 = 1751; see *Zevi Lazzadik*, p. 175, note 20), he settled there and continued his studies

under Rabbi Lemmil Levi, Chief Rabbi of that town. At the instigation of this teacher he wrote another letter to his father R. Aryeh Loeb, intimating that Eybeschütz was tired of the endless strife with Emden, and was willing to give an undertaking not to write any more charms or amulets (printed in *Edut Beja'aqob*, p. 59 a). Rabbi Aryeh Loeb sent this letter to his brother-in-law Jacob Emden, who replied in a bitter spirit. 'He was disappointed in R. Hirschel', he writes, 'whom he had estimated to be a man of strong will and character, and in that opinion had asked him to be his messenger to the Rabbis of Poland and win them over to his side. Instead of this he turned conciliator, but there can be no conciliation with the evildoer Eybeschütz. "Keep away from his net"', he ends up. (Emden's letter is dated the 25th Adar, 5513 = 1753, and is printed in *Edut Beja'aqob*, p. 59 b.)

It is nearly certain that he lived in Glogau for several years. When in 1756 the Rabbinate of the Ashkenazi congregation in London became vacant, R. Hirschel had already won fame as an eminent scholar, a great Hebrew linguist and also as one who had some knowledge of secular subjects. He was elected to the vacant office in the same year. He had received an offer, shortly before his election, to become Rabbi of Dubno in succession to his brother Saul, who had been appointed to succeed his father R. Aryeh Loeb (died 7th day of Passover, 1755, at the age of 64; see Landshut, pp. 72 and 118) as Rabbi in Amsterdam. The conditions were that he should pay the government fees, which had to be paid in Poland on the election of every Rabbi, and to provide a house for himself. He refused, probably because he had already received the call to London.

RABBI ZEVI HIRSCH IN LONDON.

Rabbi Hirschel was Rabbi in London from the end of the year 1756 until the 1st of Sivan, 1764, about eight years.¹ It was during the Seven Years' War, when the political conditions of Europe were totally different to what they are to-day. England was the *ally* of Prussia and had to fight against France, Russia, and Austria. The year 1756 was an especially critical one for England. The Duke of Newcastle, who had followed his brother Henry Pelham as Prime Minister, began the war with only three regiments fit for service. England suffered in that year not only defeats by the French in Minorca, losing Port Mahon, but also in America the English arms were far from victorious. Part of the English Fleet was destroyed and a despondency without parallel took possession of the population. Chesterfield cried in despair, 'We are no longer a Nation'.

Under such external conditions R. Hirschel entered office. The first sermon which we possess from him was delivered at an Intercession Service² ordered by the King,

¹ It is not quite clear as to when he entered upon his duties. Jacob Kimhi in his *שאלה תשובה* (p. 7) states that he was elected at the beginning of the year 5517 (September or October 1756), and signs a letter to him dated: = Sidra Noah (= November) 5517. The date of this letter seems beyond question, the letters giving the same being printed in large type. On the other hand, in an approbation to the book (Amsterdam, 1765, see Benjacob, No. 339), Rabbi Hirschel states that he wrote it at the Hague on Monday the 20th of Elul, 5517, on his way to take up his duties in London. This cannot be right, and must have been a mistake of the printer (the book having been printed eight years later), who very likely printed the wrong letters in large type. There can now be no doubt as to Kimhi's date being the correct one, as we possess in MS. Adler, No. 2248, a sermon delivered in London on *שבת בהעלותך* = May 1757 (p. 3).

² The manuscript contains four sermons given at Intercession Services

and was held on Sabbath Beha'alotka 5517 = about June 1757. (MS. Adler 1248,³ p. 3 a.) He remarked in that discourse: 'The fact that the king had commanded a special service is a proof that he does not rely on his own strength alone, but prays for the help of God'. He reminds his congregation that they live in a country where Israel is treated with kindness and where they enjoy liberty. This was said at a time when, in Germany, Jews were required to pay, not only extra war-taxes in money, but had to give up all boxes, watches, and rings, made of gold or silver. If a tax was not paid, the community had to give hostages, and the lot of the German Jews of those days was, accordingly, not an enviable one.⁴ 'We Jews', continues R. Hirschel, 'can help the King as much with our prayers as by joining the Army'—an opinion very much questioned nowadays. In another discourse, 'by command of the King', referring to some victory, he says: 'The King does not attribute victory to his own arms but to the help of God. We Jews have double reason to be thankful for the victory, as the King's peace will mean peace for us'.

'by Command of the King': (1) on pp. 2 a-2 b; (2) pp. 21 a-22 b; (3) pp. 23 a-24 a; (4) 24 a-27 b, all of the year 5520 = 1759-60. An Intercession Service was held in the Sephardi Synagogue on Feb. 6, 1756 (see Gaster: *History of the Ancient Synagogue Bevis Marks*, p. 137), when Haham Isaac Nieto preached the sermon. (Published in Spanish, London: Richard Reilly, 1756.)

³ MS. Adler 1248 consists of ninety-one folio leaves, numbered recto only. Fol. 1 is a fly-leaf, fol. 2 contains short notes on various talmudical subjects. Fol. 3 a begins with: פה לונגן יע"א ב"ה פ' בהעלותך דרוש ליום הנועד ע"פ. ציות המלך יר"ה תקט"וב לפק מנחה היא שלוחה לכבוד פורים תרט"ז. This manuscript belonged to Mr. Adler's father, the late Chief Rabbi, Nathan M. Adler, and was sent to him as a Purim present by the Dayan R. Aaron, son of R. J. of Lissa. We find on the first fly-leaf the dedication: מאת עבדו ואוהבו אהרן בר"י מליסא.

⁴ See Barbeck, *Gesch. d. Juden in Nürnberg und Fürth*, p. 84.

He deals with the question as to whether we are allowed to rejoice at the news of a great victory, which has involved the loss of so many thousands of precious lives. He refers also to the rise in the price of foodstuffs and to the bad economic conditions of the country. The poor especially suffered through the war, as the rich people selfishly complained of the sacrifices they had to make, and he pleaded earnestly for the support of the poor. He mentions also that nearly every kingdom in the world was at war. Interesting in this discourse is his reference to Aristotle (כתב אריסטו בספר המדות) who said: 'War is a hateful thing in itself. It brings death to many, distress to more, but when it is over and has brought peace and victory to a land it becomes a laudable achievement. Often, apparently trifling events cause war, so that it is difficult to understand how sane people should risk life and honour and fortune for such issues. Only the monarchs and the leaders of the peoples know the real reasons that cause wars—invariably it is the hope to enhance the renown of their countries; it is the prestige for which they are all fighting. "As the Macrocosmos, the world, so is Man, the Microcosmos."' R. Hirschel continues, 'we must wage war even on our smallest sins, because if we do not curb them in time they will overmaster us and self-victory will be more difficult. Men and nations must fight for self-respect and wage war against everything that threatens to reduce them to a lower level of morality'. These are Rabbi Hirschel's words in these critical days—great words of a great mind. In the further course of this sermon he speaks to his congregants as the Rabbi who is anxious for the strict observance of the religious ceremonies. 'I warn you against the small sins you have fallen victims to. The shaving of the beard,

a non-Jewish custom, strictly and repeatedly forbidden in our Torah ; immorality among young people, the disregard of the laws of purity (ריני טבילה), the desecration of the Sabbath;⁵ these are all very important, but you regard them as minor matters, not realizing that they are the pillars on which Judaism stands. You direct a non-Jewish servant to light the fire, to make fresh tea or coffee on Sabbath. Do not forget that the punishment for this sin is that fire breaks out in your houses, according to the saying of the Talmud,⁶ "Firebrands happen, where people desecrate the Sabbath day." Jerusalem was burnt on account of that sin (MS. A. 1248, p. 26). People carry things on the day of rest even outside the city boundaries, likewise a transgression of an important commandment.⁷ The disregarding of the laws of purity brings the punishment of death by water upon you.' He says further, 'See what happened at Portsmouth, the punishment that came upon our brethren there through the waters. Because they disregarded the laws of purity, so many wives became widows, so many

⁵ Desecration of Sabbath is mentioned in the manuscript, on pages 12 b, 22 a, 47 b, 62 a, and 73 a.

⁶ See Talmud b. Shabbat 119 a.

⁷ The carrying of anything whatsoever on Sabbath day outside one's own house and precincts is strictly forbidden according to Jer. 17. 21-2. The Rabbis allowed to make an Erub = עירוב; which literally means mixing, and is done in the following manner. Two poles are fixed at the entrance to a street or number of streets connected with wire on top, like telegraph lines, and the area thus closed in was 'mixed' into one court. Within the boundaries thus marked it is allowed to carry things which may be handled on Sabbath. The City of London seems to have had such Erubim, or was regarded as mixed area, its boundaries being closed by the City bars. Rabbi Hirschel complains that people of his time already disregarded this religious rule and carried articles outside the City. He says: והנה עינינו הרואות כמה וכמה שנושאים משא אפילו חוץ לס"ט"א במקום שאין שום היתר.

children are now orphans. All this should be a warning to us to fight the enemy within us, the evil spirit (יצר הרע).’ He concludes with a prayer for King and Country, beseeching that England’s victory may be followed by everlasting peace all over the world.

The incident of the drowning at Portsmouth to which he referred, happened on the second day of Adar I, 5518 (1758). We find an account of it in the Minute-book of the congregation (p. 7). (Paper by the Rev. I. S. Meisels in *Jewish Hist. Soc. Transactions*, vol. VI, p. 124.) The record says, ‘Eleven members of the congregation, young and old, lost their lives by drowning; the circumstances are not stated’. In memory of this disaster a Hazkarah (memorial-prayer), mentioning the names of the lost, is recited four times a year in the Synagogue at Portsmouth.

The sermons that follow generally open with a talmudical discourse, which must have lasted about one hour and a half, and continue with a sometimes equally long moral haggadic lecture. It was, in those days, a regular thing that the Rabbi, who only preached two or three times a year, gave on these occasions sermons of three, sometimes four, hours’ duration. The people mostly had a fair knowledge of Hebrew and nearly all could follow a midrashic interpretation, a ‘Wörtchen’ as it was called. To support one moral teaching the Rabbi would use two or three such Wörtchen, linked one into the other, which were a kind of intellectual gymnastics, keeping the interest of the listeners alive. Although the Rabbi had no obligation to preach more than three or four times, sometimes even only twice, a year—if he was as good and eloquent an orator as our Rabbi Hirschel, he preached more often. The gap was filled by travelling preachers, called Maggidim,

who used to travel from congregation to congregation, generally during the winter months, delivering sermons. There seem to have been such preachers in London, too, as Rabbi Hirschel refers to them in one of his discourses (MS. A. 1248, p. 44 a).

The Ashkenazi congregation was at the time of his tenure of office already fairly organized, apparently on the same principle as most of the continental communities of the time. Apart from giving decisions in ritual questions and preaching, the Rabbi's duties consisted in performing the ceremonies at weddings, *halizah*, and divorce cases. His chief duty was to study the Talmud and its commentaries and to spread this knowledge. A Rabbi's reputation and authority depended not so much upon what he actually did for the congregation as upon his fame as a great scholar, and the esteem in which he was held by Jewry at large. R. Hirschel had, as we have said, the reputation of being an eminent scholar, nevertheless he had the interest of his congregants also at heart. Although most of his time was spent in the study, he seemed to be well acquainted with everything that was going on in the community.

The London Jews of his time appear to have rapidly become Anglicized. They dressed like the Gentiles, shaved their beards; the ladies wore *décolleté* dresses. They associated with the English people, ate at their houses, and even went so far as to keep the Christian feasts to the neglect of their own. Christmas puddings seem to have been much favoured, and mixed marriages were not infrequent.⁸ They visited theatres and operas. There were coffee-houses

⁸ Pages 4 b and 35 a.

which became meeting-places for card-players.⁹ Apostates, however, were rare, because, as he says in a sermon, held on the 10th of Tebet, 5518, 'in this Country everybody can do publicly what his heart desires' (p. 4 a). He raises his voice fearlessly against all these transgressions. His warning against mixed marriages was in the following strain: 'The children of a non-Jewish wife are sure to become Christians, and, although the non-Jews of our days cannot be regarded as heathens, still they are in the category of "Ger toshab" ¹⁰ (גר תושב), are outside the Covenant of Abraham and have not taken upon themselves the observation of the Torah and its precepts (Mizwot). To marry a non-Jewish woman is, therefore, tantamount to abandoning the faith, even if she should become a Jewess.'

Festivals.

The laws of Passover, Sukkah, the dietary laws, were not observed in the proper manner. Referring to Sukkah he says, 'This precept commands us to eat and to drink, to live and to sleep in the Sukkah. God knows that I always endeavoured in my younger days to fulfil this Mizwah in its proper manner, and I was not satisfied until I succeeded in having a large room, beautifully furnished, adapted for the purpose. There I lived during the whole seven days of the festival. Now, my soul grieves that here I cannot fulfil this commandment as I ought to and as I used to do. The bulk of the people (המון עם) go into the Sukkah, say the blessing but do not eat even a morsel of bread (כזית) there, and go home to have their meal *outside*

⁹ Pages 69 a, 73 a. Card-playing was apparently very frequent, he mentions it often, see pp. 19 b, 24 b, 33 b, 73 a.

¹⁰ Literally : a settled stranger.

the Sukkah. What blasphemy! They not only do not keep the precept, but say a blessing in vain (MS. A., p. 35 a). They say, "God has commanded us to *dwell* in the Sukkah," and, as soon as they have said this, they go and transgress the command. The same applies to the Etrog; they pay a good price for it, and very often in their ignorance do not even examine whether one or more of the four plants are not unfit for use (פסול).'

Concerning Sabbath he has also several other grievances to report. Apart from the already mentioned points, in connexion with the kindling of fire (see above, p. 112), he complains that sometimes even cooking itself is done, and that generally the Sabbath is not observed as the 'Holy day' it ought to be. 'If you are thus keeping the holy day', he exclaims, after having reproached them for various failings, 'by doing things which even the Gentiles do not do on Sundays, I ask you, "Why do you come to the House of God?" God knows how tired I am of my life, when I see all your doings: I am even afraid to hear what, I am told, is happening publicly, let alone of how you desecrate the Sabbath-day in private.' He mentions among other things that people have their letters opened in front of the Post Office on Sabbath. 'Although this is not forbidden', he says, 'I have heard that it is a scandal (חילול השם) in the eyes of the Gentiles.' What this means is not quite clear. It cannot refer to tearing the letters open, as he says, 'it is not forbidden'. I am inclined to think that many people gathered before the Post Office on Sabbath mornings and asked non-Jews to open their letters. The large gathering may have become a nuisance to the general public.

Fearlessly he raises his voice against all disobedience

to the law. 'Day by day', he says, 'we can see with our own eyes the decay of our people. We sin and act against the law of God; all our endeavours are to associate with the Gentiles and to be like them. That is the chief source of all our failings. See, the women wear wigs (פאה נכרית)¹¹ and the young ones go even further and wear décolleté dresses open two spans low in front and back (יוצאים ערומים) (מלפניהם ומלאחריהם טפחיים), see pp. 12 b, 19 a, 33 a, 62 a, 70 a, and 70 b). Their whole aim is, not to appear like daughters of Israel (p. 16 b). On the one side we claim with pride that we are as good as any of our neighbours. We see that they live happily, that their commerce dominates the world, and we want to be like them, dress as they dress, talk as they talk, and want to make everybody forget that we are Jews. But, on the other hand, we are too modest and say: We are not better before God than the Gentiles, we all come from the same stock, are all descendants of Noah's three sons, and need not keep more than the seven precepts which the sons of Noah are obligated to observe. Know you that ideas like these are the ruin of Judaism? We must be conscious that we are the chosen people of God, the kingdom of Priests, and behave as it behoves "Israel", the Princes of the Almighty. Reverse the order! Be modest in your personal ambitions, be content with the material advantages you enjoy in this country, but be not modest with your faith. See where these thoughts lead you to, and how we live here. We dress on non-Jewish holidays better than on our own festivals; the Christmas pudding which the Christians prepare in memory of the Apostles

¹¹ Parḥon, the grammarian of the twelfth century, has already the same grievances. See his lexicon *מחברת הערוך*, Posonii, 1844, p. 57, s. v. צם. See also Zunz, *Ritus*, p. 4.

is more favoured than the Mazzoth. Even the children call the non-Jewish feasts "Holy" days and do not seem to know that our holy day is the Sabbath. Soon they will come to regard the "Habdalah" service (ceremony at the conclusion of Sabbath) as a sign for the beginning of the Sabbath.'

Communal Organization.

The only institutions the community apparently possessed were the Synagogues. Rabbi Hirschel does once mention in a sermon the Yeshibot, but only to state that they are vanishing. There was no hospital, and no schools were maintained by the congregation. The Rabbi had a Bet-Hamidrash in his own house, where he also held divine services. It appears that some one reproached him once for not coming frequently to Synagogue, and his answer was given in a discourse (p. 40 a) in which he appeals for more frequent attendance of the Synagogue. 'Then as an excuse for not coming to Synagogue you quote the text: "It is vain for you to rise up early, because you sit up late" (Ps. 127. 2), and my answer to you is likewise with the words of the Psalmist: (Ps. 19. 12: **נָם עֹבֵד נֹדֵר בָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם**) (עֵקֶב רַב) "My servant is warned by them, and they watch the heel of the great" (which is a witty translation instead of the literal meaning of the text; "in observing them there is great reward"). The people (**הַמֶּן עִם**) indeed look at (**עֵקֶב רַב**) the heel of the Rav, how he walks and where he goes. I know full well that many criticize me for not coming to Synagogue, although I am certain that my coming would not increase the number of Synagogue-goers. "They stood each at the doors of their tents and looked after Moses" (Exod. 33. 8), can be equally

applied to myself, but I tell you: Do not judge me, you who sit in the evenings in beer-houses and music-halls, who sleep in the morning and do not come to the House of the Lord, and then say that you stay away because you follow my example. My conscience is quite clear; I pray to God in my Bet-Hamidrash, a place designed to the Glory of God. I do not sleep, but pray with a congregation of ten, at the same time as the service in the Synagogue is being held, so that I fulfil all the requirements of the Law. I would, nevertheless, go to Synagogue (מפני כבוד הצבור) out of respect for the congregation, but for my weak state of health. The congregation knows that not the desire for sleep keeps me away, but the physical impossibility of attending.' In another sermon (p. 35 a) he refers again to Synagogue-attendance, and protests against people who had contracted mixed marriages having the audacity to demand being called up to the Torah.

The decorum in the Synagogue cannot have been above reproach. People gossiped during the Service (24 b). 'Within the Synagogue all seem to be friends and have confidential news to tell one another, but outside disunion reigns among the members' (p. 12 a). He attributes the cause of disunion to the desire to be more than one's neighbour, and to false pride.

We find also a reference to the Sheḥitah. The Shoḥetim were often irreligious and he feels helpless against this evil: 'The Shoḥetim are devoid of Mizwot and ignorant, and what can the Rav do?' are his words (והשוחרטים שלהם נערים מנוערים מן המצות ומה יעשה הרב), p. 12 b). 'The former times were better than these. See how many hospitals and houses for the poor were built and maintained, and here, with us, not one such institution is to be found.

If any one does support a poor man or a poor official, they would like him to behave as if he were their slave and not like the man of self-respect that he was in former days. (Very likely a personal note.) Try and imitate the Gentiles in this! See how many houses for the poor they have built and surrounded with beautiful gardens. They have houses for learning, called Academies, where anybody who has a thirst for knowledge can go and study, all his wants being provided for ; but we do not possess even one single Bet-Hamidrash. Look at our brethren the Sephardim (p. 19 b), they have a Bet-Hamidrash and support several scholars. Although this support is small and they have to find additional means of livelihood, nevertheless the congregation is doing its best and deserves praise for it. Especially laudable are they as many Ba'ale Batim (householders) also take part in the Shiur (Portion of study). We, the Ashkenazim, have neither a place where to learn, nor where to teach, and the "kindness of Gentiles" thus becomes our destruction, for we are too well treated and so forget our Torah.' The Gentiles, he says on another occasion (Intercession Service held in 1759, p. 24 b), are versed in the whole twenty-four books of the Bible, but our people are so ignorant that they can really recite all they know while standing on one foot.¹² They waste their time in coffee-houses and clubs playing cards, instead of devoting some hours, when free from business, to the study of the Torah. It is done in other congregations not far from us, e.g. in Amsterdam. 'It were better if you would

¹² Referring to Talm. B. Shabbat, p. 31 a : Hillel was asked by a heathen to teach him the whole Torah while he was standing on one foot. Hillel answered him : 'Do not do to your neighbour what you would not like yourself'; that is the whole Torah, everything else is only the commentary, go and study'.

read at least secular books instead of playing cards.’¹³ In another sermon (p. 18 b) we find again bitter complaints of the neglect to teach Torah to children and young people. ‘The Yeshibot are going from bad to worse and the children, while they are quite young are, first of all, taught by their parents the English language and customs, and when they grow older they do not want to learn Hebrew. Thus it happens that when an old scholar dies, there is nobody to take his place. In olden times the saying of Ecclesiastes (I. 5) “The sun arises, the sun goes down” was true, for when the sun of one Rabbi went under, another one arose and gave light to Israel. We find that on the day Rabbi Akiba died Rabbi Judah Hanasi was born. In these times when a scholar departs from this life he is lost for ever to Judaism, there are no young men to replace him, and thus the succession of scholars in Israel is broken. All this is the result of our mixing among the Gentiles and of the desire to be like them.’

Historical Notes.

In connexion with this exposition he mentions, as was customary in Memorial orations, the loss of Rabbis who had died within that year (1757–8). Their names are : (1) Moses Lwow Rabbi in Nikolsburg;¹⁴ (2) Abraham Moller

¹³ הלא טוב לקרות בספרי סיפורי מלחמות, see A., p. 27 a.

¹⁴ מהו"ר משה לבוב אב"ד דק"ק נ"ש, Moses Aaron Lemberger known also as Moses Lwow was first Rabbi in Leipnik, afterwards in Berlin, and lastly Landrabbiner of Moravia in Nikolsburg, where he died 17th Tebet, 5518, 28th Dec., 1757. See Feuchtwang in *Kaufmann-Gedenkbuch*, p. 378, and Landshut, *op. cit.*, 23.

of Bamberg;¹⁵ (3) Wolf Rabbi of Friedberg;¹⁶ (4) Meir of Hannover;¹⁷ (5) Abraham Rabbi of Emden;¹⁸ (6) Leb of Heitzfeld;¹⁹ (7) Jacob of Greditz (Graetz);²⁰ (8) Isaac of Hanau;²¹ (9) Akiba Eger Rabbi of Pressburg;²² and (10) Zevi Hirsch of Hildesheim.²³ In another Hespèd (Memorial Service) held on the 17th of Tammuz, 5522 = 1762 (p. 71a) he mentions the death of his relative 'the Rabbi of Berlin', referring to David Fraenkel,²⁴ Mendelssohn's teacher; the Rabbi of Fuerth,²⁵ likewise

¹⁵ מו"ה אברהם מאליר אב"ד דק"ק באמבערג. See Kaufmann, פנקס, פירוש התורה, vol. VII, p. 27. He was formerly Rabbi of Oettingen. See his approbation to Baruk b. Elkana's פירוש התורה, Fürth, 1752.

¹⁶ מוה וואלף אב"ד דק"ק פרידבורג.

¹⁷ מו"ה מאיר אב"ד דק"ק הנובר. See Emden, *Megillat Sefer*, p. 144 and D. Kaufmann in *Monatsschrift*, 1896, pp. 220 and 274.

¹⁸ מו"ה אברהם אב"ד דק"ק עמדען.

¹⁹ מו"ה ליב אב"ד דק"ק הייזפעלט. Heitzfeld or Hatzfeld is Heidingsfeld near Würzburg in Bavaria.

²⁰ Jacob of Greditz = גרעדיץ דק"ק יעקב אב"ד דק"ק נרעדיץ was the son of R. Hirsch of Pintschow and became Rabbi of Glogau. He was an ancestor of Rabbi Dr. Kaempf of Prague. See Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 75 and Emden in *Edut Beja'akob*, p. 59a.

²¹ מו"ה איצק אב"ד דק"ק הענא.

²² מו"ה עקיבא איגר אב"ד דק"ק פרעשבורג. Akiba Eger the Elder was Rabbi of Pressburg, died 15th of September, 1757 (and not, as Zunz, *Monats-tage*, has it, in 1746). He was author of the work *Mishnat de R. Akiba*. See Auerbach, *Gesch. d. Juden in Halberstadt*.

²³ מו"ה צבי הירש אב"ד דק"ק הילדעסהיים.

²⁴ שארי הג'אבד דק"ק ברלין. David Fraenkel was a teacher of the Philosopher, Solomon Maimon, and author of the work קרבן עדה, a commentary on the Palest. Talmud (see Kayserling, *Moses Mendelssohn*). He was at first Rabbi in Dessau, and became Rosh-Beth-Din in Berlin on the 14th Ab, 1743, and died, 55 years old, on 12 Nisan, 1762.

²⁵ Died, 81 years old, on May 21, 1762. He was formerly Rabbi in Holleschau and Worms, and was born in Frankfurt, ca. 1681. See

without mentioning his name, referring to David Strauss of Frankfurt, and Rabbi Moses Rapp,²⁶ Dayan of Frankfurt on-the-Main.

There are only two other historical references in this volume of sermons. The one is the mention of the Jews who were drowned at Portsmouth, of which we have already spoken, and the other is an appeal for the congregation of Jungbunzlau in Bohemia (בומסלא), where the Synagogue was destroyed by fire (Discourse on Sabbath Teshubah, 5522, p. 73).

The neglect of the Torah studies seems to have been his chief grievance against the London community. It occurs many times in the MS., but the following is, I think, worth quoting, 'Instead of gathering in the houses of learning people go to operas, plays, concerts, and clubs.²⁷ There is no respect for learning and learned men. Why then should a boy be anxious to study the Law? He cannot yet grasp the meaning of Olam Habba (namely, that by studying Torah he fulfils a divine command for which he will receive reward in the world to come), what other attraction could a child have than the wish to become a Rav, a great and honoured man? If, however, the men of Torah are not held in respect the child, naturally, has no wish to study, and thus the Torah is forgotten. Our Sages in the Mishnah say: "Raise up many disciples" (Abot c. 1, Mishnah 1). I was not able to follow this rule in your congregation. I have no pupils, not even a col-

L. Loewenstein, *Jahrb. d. Lit. Ges. Frankfurt*, vol. VI, 1908-9, p. 187; Barbeck, *Geschichte der Juden in Nürnberg und Fürth*, p. 64.

²⁶ וזמאור הנדול מו"ה משה ראפף ר"ב דק"ק פ"פ דמיין, died 27 Adar, 1762; see Horowitz, *Frankf. Grab.*, p. 338.

²⁷ לאפדע לפלע לקונסערטם לקלאב. See also MS. A., pp. 69a and 73a for similar expressions.

league (חבר) with whom I could pursue my studies. Even the learned men in the community fail to train their children in the study of the Torah. I had one pupil, and that was my son (R. Saul), but I had to send him away to another country. There he found his helpmate (wife), and I have found no other pupil since (p. 41 a). 'When God showed me the way to this congregation', he says in 1762, 'which elected me to serve them in the name of the Lord, I came with the scroll of the Law to you, to propound His teachings among you, and that is my work which I carry on my shoulders. I established a Yeshibah but have not succeeded with it. What is left to me now but my voice "to publish righteousness in the great congregation" (Ps. 40. 10)? See, I have not closed my lips, had no fear of anybody, have done nothing with the object of finding favour in the eyes of anybody, or in order to gain pecuniary advantage. To God alone do I look for help, and have never made gold my idol. Thanks to the Almighty I possess enough of gold and silver, but do not think that I acquired it here. God knows, one cannot become rich from a Rabbinat; all one acquires from the holy service can virtually be carried on one shoulder.'²⁸

His one desire was to keep the flame of knowledge alive; to that he devoted all his energy, but to the end of his days he never liked the office of Rabbi. He considered it a bitter path, a bread of misery, and expresses this feeling in a Hebrew poem written in later life: 'O God! From Thy hand alone I ask for the portion of my inheritance (Ps. 16. 5), be it large or small. I shall thank Thee for an olive-leaf even, but do not let me fall into the hand

²⁸ בי עבודת הקודש עליהם בכתב ישאו (Num. 7. 9).

of man.' (See *Hammagid*, 1870, p. 125, and Landshut, p. 109.)

In London he did not find the field where his work would bear fruit: 'The pillars of the Torah totter, very few are the students of the Law who desire to rise to a higher standard, and these few are scattered into the different distant parts of the town, live therefore a lonely life and cannot profit from one another. There are no Talmud-Torahs for children, and what will be the future of Judaism if this state of affairs continues? See what is being done in nearly every congregation, large or small, in Germany. Are they larger than yours or richer than you? And yet how many Synagogues and Bate Midrashim have they founded to the Glory of God, as a sign that Judaism is eternal and will never become extinct (62 b).'

He urged for co-operation with the Sephardi community (pp. 7 and 17 a). The Passover lamb, he says, had to be eaten in separate unions (חבורה), but for its preparation all Israel entered at one door; so should we, too, even though we be two distinct congregations, in matters that concern all Jewry, co-operate and act together.

In many instances he combines reflections of a religious-philosophical nature with his moral teachings. Already in those days there were people in London, who disregarded the Jewish religious ceremonies. He was a clear thinker, and had a profound knowledge of Maimuni's *Guide of the Perplexed*, from which he took most of his philosophical arguments, and made effective use of them in combating the views of the half-educated Jew of the day (cited on pp. 4 a, 31 b, 32 b, 33 a, 39 b). 'By studying philosophy in a superficial manner people became unbelievers. After reading three or four pages of a philosophical book they

think they have found more wisdom than is to be found in all the folios of both the Talmuds' (p. 15 b). Maimonides and Bahya said that the chief precept of Judaism was to arrive at the belief in God by means of intellectual contemplation.²⁹ Others argued against this view, holding that it is better to believe without trying to understand. Belief is called in Hebrew 'Emunah' = trust. As no human mind can attain to *understand* God, those who think they have reached that standard are only deceiving themselves. What they really have achieved is, that they believe in themselves, in the great power of their own mind (p. 33 a). We Jews have to believe in the Torah and its precepts as revealed to us by God and as handed down to us in the oral tradition. Human beings can never succeed in understanding God's Being. Maimonides, who considered that the highest human perfection lay in truly grasping the essence of God's Being, did not mean this literally but only said it as an apology against aggressions by the religious thinkers of other nations. He also tried to give reasons for all the Mizvot, but he failed. More true is the view of our Rabbis, that mankind reaches the understanding of God only when the body parts from the soul. The thirteen articles of the creed are supposed to embody every precept of the Torah. All the 613 Mizvot are only the means for the attainment of the belief contained in these articles. If that were so, why should not people say: 'I believe in all these "Ikkarim" (articles of creed), will say them every day, and then I need not do anything else, as all the other precepts are only intended to bring man to the belief in God and to prevent him from being an idolater'. This argument would be quite in accordance with the teaching of Maimonides,

²⁹ See Maimonides, *Moreh*, II, 33.

and shows at once the fallacy of his doctrine, that the thirteen articles contain the essence of Jewish religion. R. Hirschel comes to the conclusion that all precepts are of divine origin and all equally important. They are not only means to an end or a preventive against idol worship, but are in themselves a safeguard against the wickedness of mankind. The Mizvot are holy because their intention is to make us holy and bring us nearer to God. Man cannot decide which precept is important and which is not. For this reason it happens that people who by philosophical thinking want to attain the understanding of God mostly fall into sin.

The spirit of enlightenment seems to have spread to London, and his references to the 'Philosophers' were probably meant for those who studied the books of the Measphim, the forerunners of modern Jewish research. We must not think, from what we have just heard, that R. Hirschel was opposed to all learning which fell outside the sphere of the Talmud. Like his uncle, Jacob Emden, he possessed a deep historical sense, a critical mind far in advance of the Rabbi of those days. Most students of his time concerned themselves exclusively with the Halakic side of the Talmud. To them it was of more interest to know what a Rabbi in the Talmud said and how he decided a Din (point of law), than to know that Rabbi Judah Hanasi was not a contemporary of Rabbi Akiba. Rabbi Hirschel, however, held that the Talmud cannot be properly understood without a thorough knowledge of its chronology. He impressed upon his students to study the methodology of the Talmud, and recommended them to read Samuel Hanagid's *Mebo Hatalmud*, Simson of Chinon's *Sefer Keritut* and other books of the kind.

Later, when Rabbi of Halberstadt and head of an important Rabbinical school, he used to give an historical introduction to his lectures. The sources of the text, the commentators and their periods were all discussed before he actually commenced the reading of the Talmud proper. When he heard of the publication of Heilprin's *Seder Hadorot*, which was printed in his time in Karlsruhe, he was full of joy. The publisher asked him for an approbation of the work, but he answered: 'A work like this does not need any approbation; that the sun shines nobody need testify' (Auerbach, p. 92).

One of the reasons for his dissatisfaction with his position in London was that he felt his preaching had not made people more religious. On Sabbath Teshubah, 1760 (p. 35 a), he says: 'When first I came here I was anxious to do something great, something that would benefit the whole congregation. I had made up my mind that nothing should be too much trouble for me if I could only diminish religious transgression and lead my flock into the right path. You brought me from a far-off land across the ocean, incurring great expense thereby, and I said to myself, "This surely is the work of God". Although I knew my worth to be little, I thought of the saying of our Fathers: "Those who occupy themselves with communal matters the merits of their Fathers are their help" (Abot, c. 2; Mishnah 2). I had courage and hoped to succeed in my endeavours. Now, after having been with you for four years, and never having refrained from pointing out your failings, I see that nobody has hearkened to me and that things have not improved in any way (p. 70 b). I know, you have often wondered why I repeat so frequently my reproaches about your trans-

gressions of the Laws of Sabbath and the festivals, of your failings in public and private life, about the behaviour of your women-folk, although I saw that my words had no effect. But what else could I do if I would fulfil my duty? God had spoken to me: "Call out with thy voice, do not keep back, raise thy voice like a Shofar and tell my people their sins and the house of Jacob their failings". I know also there are many scoffers among you, who, like the Rasha' (wicked man) in the Passover Haggadah, tell you: מה העבודה הזאת לכם: "What good is this service to you?" What right has the Rav to speak in the Synagogue of your private doings? My answer to these people is: לי "בעבור זה עשה ה'" "It is my sad lot for which I was destined by Almighty God, it is my duty, which I shall not be deterred from fulfilling" (p. 70 a).'

Half a year later, on the 17th of Tammuz, 1762, he exclaims (p. 73 b): 'God Almighty only knows how weary I am of my life here. I cannot bear any longer to behold all that you do in public and in your private life. Is it not enough that for nearly 1,700 years we have been expelled from the table of our Father, are like sheep without a shepherd, and (בעי"ה) how many misfortunes have befallen us, how many kinds of illnesses have we and our children to bear, how many terrible wars have come upon us, and all this on account of our sins'.

Notwithstanding the vigour of these utterances he was a man of even and calm temperament. He was averse to all sort of quarrel: 'It is more necessary to avoid strife than to keep a fast-day' he says (p. 17 b). His general outlook on life was likewise calm and peaceful. 'Forgetfulness', he says (p. 71 a) 'is very necessary'. Our sages recommend the provision of a number of wine-cups in

a house of mourning, so that the people may drink and forget sorrow and pain. To worry over the past is not the act of a wise man. It increases melancholy and deranges the mind of man.³⁰

R. Hirschel in Halberstadt.

In spite of this calm view of life he seems to have become more and more dissatisfied with his life in London. A few months later, at the beginning of the year 1763, the Halberstadt community opened negotiations with him, offering him the position of Chief Rabbi in their congregation. On the 16th of Shevat, 5523 (= February, 1763), R. Elijah, son of Naphtali Hirsch Fraenkel, Parnas in Halberstadt, who was on business in Berlin, writes home as follows: 'One of the leading men of the Berlin community had said to him, that if the people of Halberstadt elect the Rabbi of London, they simply pave the way for him to Berlin. Halberstadt would only be a halting stage and give the Berlin community a splendid opportunity for observing the pastoral activity of the Rabbi, and enable them to judge whether he was worthy of the Rabbinate of Berlin'. When, a few months later, the Parnasim of Halberstadt recommended him for election (Sivan, 1763) a letter was written to him, in which this passage of the Parnas's letter was quoted, the Parnasim expressing their anxiety that the possibility mentioned might become true. The letter of the Parnasim says further: 'They had heard that the study of Torah was very much neglected in

וכן ציוו חז"ל להרבות כוסות בבית האבל למען ישחה וישכח רישו, כי³⁰
הראנות על העבר וודאי אינן מפעולות החכם יען שמרבה השחורה ומביא
ערבוב הרעת באדם. (See Talm. Babli Ketubot 8b; Krauss, *Talm. Archäologie*, II, p. 70; A. Buechler, *Am-ha-arez*, p. 210.)

London and was causing him to be dissatisfied with his position and that, for this reason, he was anxious to exchange his present office for one in a really observant congregation on the Continent'. It having happened to them on a former occasion that a Rabbi, whom they had elected, had, on his way to them, accepted a call from another congregation,³¹ they were now anxious to avoid a recurrence of such an event. For this reason they must ask him to give them not only his consent in writing, but also an undertaking to commence his duties within six months after his election, and not to leave them before three years had passed. R. Hirschel replies in a letter, remarkable for its beautiful Hebrew style, that he was willing to accept the position offered to him; but the undertaking asked for he did not give until the month of Shebat, 1764, when he received in exchange for it his Contract of Appointment, called 'Rabbinical Letter' (כתב רבנות). This was handed to him in Amsterdam by Samuel Halberstadt. In another letter written in London on the 22nd Shebat, 1764, Rabbi Hirschel signifies his intention of coming to Halberstadt between Pesah and Shabuot of the same year. The Contract of Appointment is dated the 14th of Ab, 1763. He was to receive a salary of three hundred Thaler (£150—in London he had £250), a free house suitable for his position, and certain fees for marriages and other ceremonies. The community undertook to assist the Rabbi in founding or re-establishing a Rabbinical Academy (Yeshibah) by providing for the

³¹ The Rabbi was R. Jacob Cohen Popers, who on his way to Halberstadt was elected Rabbi of Frankfurt a. M. and remained there without ever going to Halberstadt. He was first Rabbi in Koblenz. In Frankfurt he was the teacher of R. Tevele Schiff (see later), and died 70 years old on Sabbath, 22nd Shevat, 1740 (Horowitz, *Frankf. Rabb.*, II, pp. 82 and 105).

maintenance of twelve scholars. On his election the district of Ravensberg rejoined the Halberstadt community and undertook to pay the Rabbi a separate salary. His moving expenses were defrayed by the congregation and amounted, according to a detailed account in the possession of the congregation, to 481 Thaler, 11 Groschen, and 6 Pfennig. The Rabbi received on his installation the customary Derashah present³² consisting of 179 Thaler and 8 Groschen (Auerbach, *loc. cit.*, p. 91).

His predecessor in Halberstadt was R. Meir Barbi,³³ who in 1763 was elected Rabbi of Pressburg. According to Auerbach, who gives no authority for his statement (p. 91), R. Hirschel arrived in Halberstadt on the 1st of Sivan, 1764. This date does not seem quite beyond question. He signs an approbation to the book : שנות חיים (printed in Amsterdam, 1765) in Amsterdam on Friday, the 27th of Tammuz, 1764, where he says: 'I am on my way to, and looking forward to officiate in, Halberstadt'.³⁴ Landshut, referring to this approbation, says that he went to see his relations in Amsterdam, his brother Saul being chief Rabbi there. So far he is quite correct, R. Hirschel went to the wedding of his daughter Sarah, who was married to R. Jacob Moses, the son of his brother Saul. He is, however, not correct when he says that R. Hirschel went soon after his installation from Halberstadt to Amsterdam. He passed through that city on his way from London, as he clearly states in the approbation just referred to,

³² Derashah present was given to the Rabbi on preaching his first sermon (Derashah), similar to a wedding present likewise called by the same name, on account of the discourse of the bridegroom delivered at the wedding or on the preceding Sabbath.

³³ Meir Barbi, author of שו"ת מה"רם ברבי, Dyhrenfurt-Prag, 1786-92.

³⁴ העומד על דרך ומצפה לק"ק האלברשטט והמדינה.

which, curiously enough, is mentioned by Landshut. In the work *Zevi Lazzaddik*, published by Zevi Ezekiel Michelsohn, Rabbi of Plonsk (printed in Piotrkow, 1904), is published a letter, bearing no date, of Eliezer Libermann, Dayan in London, addressed to Rabbi Hirschel, who was then in Amsterdam on his way to Halberstadt.³⁵ Libermann congratulates the Rabbi and his brother, the Rabbi of Amsterdam, on the occasion of the wedding of their children. He also mentions that a young student (בחור אחר) who left Halberstadt two months previously and had arrived in London had told him of the elaborate preparations the Halberstadt community were making for the reception of the Rabbi. A fine house 'filled with everything of the best' was in readiness for him, and the community was awaiting his arrival like the advent of a festival. R. Hirschel in his reply to Libermann does not refer to anything of a personal nature, but confines himself to the ritual question asked. He writes that he is very worried and low spirited and subscribes himself, 'Your friend, who is troubled on all sides and careworn, who writes with a weak hand, &c. Zevi Hirsch' (Michelsohn, *loc. cit.*, p. 71). Although no exact date is given the earliest at which R. Hirschel could have written this letter is the month of Elul, as he sends New Year greetings to Libermann. He was therefore not only in Tammuz (date of the approbation just mentioned above) but also in Elul still in Amsterdam. It consequently seems more likely that he entered upon his duties in Halberstadt shortly before the New Year, 5525 = 1764 and not, as Auerbach states, that he came on

³⁵ See also letter of Meshullam Zalman Emden to his father in the 'Get of Cleve' affair, dated 20 Tammuz, 1767, in *Or Hayashar*, p. 79 a, where he mentions Libermann.

the 1st of Sivan. The wedding of his daughter probably took place soon after the Fast of Ab and only after that day could he have left for his new place of activity. He could not possibly have come there in Sivan and gone away again for two months shortly afterwards, while he might have remained in Amsterdam for that period *before* proceeding to Halberstadt.

Soon after his arrival he was called upon to settle a dispute between the congregation and his predecessor R. Meir Barbi. A certain R. Sender, of Braunschweig, had presented the congregation with the sum of 6,000 Thaler, the interest of which was to be given one half to Rabbi Barbi and the other half was to be used for charitable purposes. When the Rabbi left for Pressburg the donor wrote to the wardens instructing them that they should not send the half share of the income from the said fund to Rabbi Meir. The latter made a protest, and the newly appointed Rabbi Hirschel successfully brought about an understanding between the parties, Barbi receiving in commutation a sum equal to the interest for five and a half years, and after the year 1768 the half share was to be given to the Rabbi of Halberstadt for the time being.

In Halberstadt our Rabbi's chief care was devoted to the development of his rabbinical school. He succeeded in bringing it to fame, and many of his pupils became great Rabbinical authorities in later years. One of his pupils was R. Loeb Eger, Rabbi in Halberstadt, another, Rabbi Issachar Berisch, became Rabbi of Hannover. His pastoral activity outside this Yeshibah made him generally respected and honoured.

His congregants had unbounded confidence in his honesty and clearness of judgement, and he was able to

bring to satisfactory conclusion many cases of dispute which had been before the Bet Din of Halberstadt for many years previous to his arrival.

Nevertheless, he did not long remain in Halberstadt. In 1770 he left for Mannheim. Auerbach gives two reasons for his relinquishing the office at Halberstadt. The congregation of Bleicherode, formerly belonging to the district of Halberstadt, had some dispute with the latter congregation and Hirschel decided in Halberstadt's favour. Thereupon a certain unnamed individual insinuated that he decided in this way, on account of his dislike of the Bleicherode people, who did not welcome him on his arrival as other congregations of the neighbourhood had done. This was declared publicly, and was a grave charge against the Rabbi's impartiality as judge, and an attack on his honesty. Although the Halberstadt community did everything in their power to repair the assault on their Rabbi's honour, he himself never forgot the incident. The other reason for his relinquishing the office, mentioned by Auerbach, is that there were many adherents of Eybeschütz in the community. Rabbi Hirschel had in earlier years written several letters in defence of his uncle Jacob Emden. He had, as we have mentioned, tried to bring about a reconciliation between him and Eybeschütz, but failed. Although in later years he is not known to have taken any active part in the dispute, the fact that he was a nephew of Emden and son of R. Aryeh Loeb of Amsterdam, Emden's vigorous supporter, was sufficient reason for the adherents of Eybeschütz to regard him as their enemy. The appointment of a Shoḥet with an authorization from Eybeschütz may have been regarded by him as a personal slight, and confirmed him in his decision to leave Halberstadt.

A letter written by Abraham Halberstadt, one of the Rabbis of that place, to Jeremiah Levy of Berlin,³⁶ is worth quoting, as being an impartial opinion of his work in Halberstadt, Abraham having been an admirer of Eybeschütz, and consequently not a friend of the Emden family. He says: 'That the great man has gone away from us is felt as a real loss by everybody. His personal virtues, his activity in the community and in the Yeshibah deserve all praise. We were proud to have such a scholar at the head of our community. Who will replace him? He has undoubtedly left a difficult position for his successor whoever it be, for he will never gain laurels or recognition however much he may try to imitate his predecessor. The splendour of his personality is still before the eyes of all, and where one was used to something good, only the better can be appreciated. To achieve being better than he is, is indeed very difficult. Already there are cracks in the body of the Yeshibah, which I fear will be followed by its entire collapse. More than half of the Baḥurim (scholars) have already left, and they were the best ones. Still it may be God has ordered it so, that no strife should ensue in Israel. The small spark of disunion which has been glimmering in the congregation might have increased if he had remained'. To judge from the last part of this letter, R. Hirschel's relationship with Emden was at least one of the causes of his departure from Halberstadt. (See Auerbach, *loc. cit.*, pp. 192 ff.)

R. Hirschel in Mannheim.

In Mannheim he succeeded Samuel Helman, or Hilman,

³⁶ Brother of Judah Levy, grandfather of Adelheid wife of Dr. Zunz (see Landshut, p. 120).

who had been one of the chief supporters of Jacob Emden. He accepted a smaller salary than he had at his former place (Halberstadt), proving how little he valued worldly goods where his principles and conviction were at stake.

He was not to find rest and satisfaction even in Mannheim. In a sermon preached there on Sabbath Teshubah (between New Year and Atonement-day) of the year אש"ך: 5531 = 1771, he complains of slanders which were very frequent there. (See *Zavi Laz.*, p. 135.) 'I always heard that Mannheim was a great kehillah', he said, 'but it is not really so, they are very provincial' (ומאז שמעתי אומרים) (שקלה הזאת גדולה ומעו בזה שהיא כאילו גדולה מאד).

Mannheim at that time was a very observant congregation, and consisted of 264 families (Loewenstein, *Kurpfalz*, p. 256). He once said, by way of a joke, that in London he had money but no Jews, in Mannheim Jews but no money, and in Berlin no money and no Jews (Loewenstein, *loc. cit.*, p. 255). He had been elected to Mannheim in 1768, but did not go because he expected a call to Berlin, and when, in 1770, he finally accepted the call, he stayed there barely three years. His ministration left so little mark that Carmoly doubted his ever having held the office of Rabbi in Mannheim.³⁷ Very likely the negotiations with Berlin commenced soon after his arrival, and that may have diverted his mind and prevented him from initiating anything important. The Contract of his election to Berlin is dated the 1st of Iyyar, 1772 (Landshut, pp. 78-80; Michelsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 149), while the negotiations had commenced as early as 1771.

³⁷ To the proofs mentioned by Loewenstein for his having officiated in Mannheim (p. 255, note) is now to be added the sermon in Michelsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

(To be continued.)